

Byron L. Dorgan

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Wednesday

March 29, 2000

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**Further action still needed to help family farmers
as they enter energy-intensive spring planting:**

DORGAN WELCOMES OPEC DECISION TO PRODUCE MORE OIL BUT SAYS U.S. MUST DO MORE TO REDUCE DEPENDENCE

(WASHINGTON, D.C.) — OPEC's decision to increase oil production by about 1.7 million barrels a day is welcome news that will help lower prices at the gasoline pump, but U.S. Senator Byron Dorgan (D-ND) says it's not a long-term solution to high energy prices.

"I give the Clinton Administration high marks for the work it did to convince OPEC to produce more oil," Dorgan said. "That's a helpful decision and prices will moderate at the gasoline pump a bit over time because of it. But it's not a long term solution. If history has taught us anything, it is that OPEC will eventually try this again. OPEC's purpose for being is to manipulate prices, to drive prices up by cutting back production."

"So, we need to recognize this decision as what it is, a temporary respite, nothing more," Dorgan said. "We are still far too dependent on foreign oil, and we need to act to reduce that dependence."

Dorgan said Congress should enact pending legislation to encourage domestic oil production as well as greater conservation and energy efficiency, and greater use of ethanol, wind, geothermal and biomass energy. He said Congress also needs to act immediately to ensure that authority for the nation's Strategic Petroleum Reserve is renewed and does not expire, as now scheduled, on Friday, March 31.

The North Dakota lawmaker has also asked President Clinton to consider releasing some of the Strategic Petroleum Reserve to help further moderate fuel prices in the United States as family farmers, who are already battling severely depressed farm commodity prices, enter one of the most fuel intensive periods of their production year, spring planting. "Regrettably, OPEC's increased production is not sufficient alone to drive prices down in time for spring planting, or enough to offset the sharp increase in gasoline and diesel fuel prices over the past year. Further and immediate action is required," Dorgan said.

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